

FRIENDS OF

DEMOCRACY'S BATTLE

VOL. VII

281

December 15, 1949

No. 24

A Report On Flynn

(THE STORY OF AN EX-LIBERAL)

TEN SHORT YEARS ago John T. Flynn widely was hailed as a liberal. He was a columnist for the New Deal magazine, the *New Republic*; he was an ardent foe of Fascism; he had written books called *Graft in Business*, *Investment Trusts Gone Wrong*, *God's Gold—The Story of Rockefeller*, *Security Speculation*.

In fact, Flynn was slightly tinged with radicalism. He sometimes criticized the late President Roosevelt for not being far enough to the Left.

But a lot has happened to Flynn in the last ten years.

Move To Right

His column was dropped by the *New Republic*; he gradually became unconcerned about the evils of Fascism; his books talked less and less about the menace of irresponsible capital and more and more about the menace of Roosevelt's New Dealers.

And this year Flynn wrote a book called *The Road Ahead* which declares that Liberals, New Dealers, advocates of civil rights legislation, etc., etc., are America's "real enemies."

Naturally, the extreme Right-wingers have been enthusiastic.

The far Rightist Chicago *Tribune* and Hearst newspaper chain began publishing Flynn's articles; so did the anti-Semitic Merwin K. Hart. And wartime sedition defendants, ranging from William Dudley Pelley to Elizabeth Dilling to Gerald Winrod to Charles B. Hudson, began praising Flynn, reprinting his articles, selling his pamphlets and books.

Maybe all this happened because Flynn couldn't quite get over being an isolationist and rather strongly anti-British.

Many liberals during the 1930's were isolationists or pacifists, and many of them viewed "British imperialism" with distaste. But by 1941 American liberals overwhelmingly had become internationalists and strong British sympathizers. Flynn, on the other hand, was saying: "This is the second time Americans have been played by the British Empire for the suckers they are, and the President of the United States

has become a mouthpiece for British propaganda."

It was in 1940, as the Nazi armies were over-running Europe, that Flynn began his swing to the Right.

That year Doubleday, Doran published his book, *Country Squire in the White House*. In this 122-page volume Flynn described himself as a "liberal, who is well left of center," but the book itself attacked the liberal President Roosevelt as an aristocrat, a disappointment to liberals, a militarist, and a war-monger.

The American Fellowship Forum, which was run by the Nazi agent, Friedrich Auhagen, immediately praised Flynn and reprinted a paragraph from the new book.

And late in 1940 Flynn became increasingly active in the isolationist cause. In December of that year he was denouncing England's struggle against the Nazis as an "imperialist war" and telling the America First Committee members that "the President of the United States . . . the British government's agents and the William Allen White Committee are conferring, intriguing, working, night and day behind the scenes . . . to take you from the one dangerous position to another, step by step, into this terrible war."

Subsequently, Flynn became Chairman of the New York chapter of the America First Committee and National Chairman of the Keep America Out of War Congress. Charles A. Lindbergh was a speaker for both groups; the two held a joint rally at Mecca Auditorium, New York City; the Congress from time to time recommended rallies staged by the A.F.C.

Almost from the beginning the tenor of the A.F.C. and Congress rallies was pro-Axis. In April, 1941, America Firsters cheered Lindbergh's statement that "it is now obvious

that England is losing the war;" and in May, according to a New York *Times* report, a Congress audience "cheered Charles A. Lindbergh's name for 35 seconds, booed and hissed the names of Anthony Eden and Viscount Halifax, and gave only mild catcalls when Hitler or nazism were mentioned."

At first Flynn tried to fight the Fascist-like elements that poured into the isolationist groups — the America First Committee particularly. He repudiated the support of the German American Bund, the sedition defendant Joseph E. McWilliams, and the Coughlinite Edward Lodge Curran.

Becomes Involved . . .

But Flynn increasingly became involved with the Fascist-like elements himself. He wrote an article for *Scribner's Commentator* in April, 1941; was quoted by the magazine in June, and wrote another article for it in August. This magazine openly was anti-British, pro-Vichy, and pro-Japanese. Several of its employees appeared before the Federal grand jury investigating pro-Axis activity, and one of its editors subsequently was convicted as an unregistered Japanese agent.

Meanwhile Flynn was telling America First audiences that Great Britain was "the greatest aggressor of all," that passage of the Lend-Lease bill would make President Roosevelt a "dictator," that Secretary of the Army Stimson and Secretary of the Navy Knox should be "driven" out of the President's cabinet, and that "I am not willing to see millions or thousands or even a few men sacrificed to make the world safe for the British Empire . . ."

The Feud Ends

Under these circumstances the feud between Flynn and the Fascist-like elements didn't last long. By midsummer the *Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter*, organ of the German American Bund, proclaimed that Flynn was "a courageous man, just like Lindbergh," began quoting Flynn, and ran headlines saying: "Some 'Outside Earnings' of the Roosevelts . . . Based on J. T. Flynn's 'Squire in the White House'."

The Coughlinites, who in the spring of 1941 predicted that "Flynn's blood" would "run in the streets," eventually forgave Flynn too. The Coughlinite newspaper, the *Gaelic American*, finally got around to headlining the words: "J. T. Flynn, Veteran American Crusader."

It was in September, 1941, that Lindbergh made his famous speech

charging "the British, the Jews, and the Roosevelt administration" with dragging this country into war. The newspaper, *PM*, reported that Flynn had repudiated this speech, but Flynn labeled the *PM* report "absolutely untrue." A former New York City magistrate shortly thereafter demanded Flynn's removal from the Board of Higher Education for his failure to repudiate Lindbergh's "malicious" anti-Semitic "attack."

It was in September, too, that Flynn chaired an America First rally in New York's Town Hall. When a speaker, William S. Orton, declared that "there will always be a Germany," the applause was so hearty that the newspapers commented on it.

A.F.C.'s Connections

Meanwhile, the America First Committee went from bad to worse. Among its speakers was Laura Ingalls who subsequently was convicted as a Nazi agent. On the West Coast, hangers-on at the Bund headquarters, the Deutsches Haus, helped arrange for and run A.F.C. rallies. The Berlin short-wave radio and Mussolini's propaganda agents joined the Bund newspaper and Father Charles E. Coughlin's *Social Justice* in praising the A.F.C.

Flynn received his share of the praise too. E. J. Garner, who later was one of the wartime sedition defendants, called Flynn a "realist," lauded him for standing by Lindbergh despite Lindbergh's "the British, the Jews, and the Roosevelt administration" speech; and added: "Every keen expose of the new deal is a SPIKE in the coffin lid of Jewocracy." William Dudley Pelley, who wanted to be America's Hitler, quoted Flynn and declared that the America Firster had "called his shots." A few months later Pelley was convicted of sedition and sentenced to serve fifteen years in jail.

Japanese bombs falling on Pearl Harbor killed the America First Committee, and Flynn dropped out of the news for two full years.

But in 1944 he was back again. That year Doubleday, Doran* published Flynn's book, *As We Go Marching*. This book said that Fascism was inevitable in Italy, that the "rushing currents" in that country, not Mussolini, were responsible for the rise of Fascism there. Flynn

added that Roosevelt's policies were leading the United States toward Fascism and a program which would save "our essential political liberties" must take "a wholly different direction from (that) toward which we now move."

Carl Mote, who said Germans were "superior" to Americans and who was closely associated with Gerald L. K. Smith, proclaimed the Flynn book to be "a profound study of our Republican institutions under the impact of the New Deal;" and *Money*, John Scott's monthly which followed the usual far Rightist propaganda line, announced it had copies of the Flynn book for sale.

Probably most important of the far Rightists who found Flynn's book pleasing was Merwin K. Hart, President of the National Economic Council.

Hart, who plugged the Flynn book both in his *Economic Council Letter* and *Economic Council Review of Books*, was particularly important because of his standing in Right-wing circles and because 1944 apparently was the beginning of repeated Flynn-Hart collaboration.

Hart for years has had offices in New York City's Empire State Building; the backers of his enterprises have included such wealthy men as Lamont Du Pont, Ernest Weir, John J. Raskob; ever since 1945 Hart has been a prime mover in every major attempt to unite all far Rightists under one banner.

Hart's Record

On the other hand, Hart, ever since the 1930's has been one of the leading American apologists for Franco Spain. He is the one who introduced Jane Anderson to Spanish officials; Miss Anderson later went from Spain to Germany where she broadcast short-wave for the Nazis during World War II. Closely associated with Hart in the American Union for Nationalist Spain was John E. Kelly, who later was convicted as an unregistered Spanish agent. In pre-war years Hart was a speaker for American Patriots, Inc., a group which is now on the U. S. Attorney General's list of "Fascist" organizations.

In the postwar years Hart has made regular trips to Franco Spain and has gone all out in parroting the Nazi propaganda line about Jews. Hart's *Economic Council Letter* in December, 1947, for example, charged that the Jews dominate the Democratic Party, to a large extent the Republican Party, the United States Government, the bi-partisan foreign policy, the western democra-

cies, the United Nations, and, in fact, virtually every country in the world except Spain, which under the Fascist dictator, Franco, Hart considers a "Christian" nation. It was early in 1948 that Hart urged his followers to "possess . . . one or more guns . . . and a reasonable supply of ammunition" so that they could "protect" themselves in the Franco way if necessary.

It was in 1944 that Flynn sat on the dais at one of Hart's National Economic Council luncheons; that same year he was on the sponsoring committee of another Hart luncheon which called for "Protest and Action." In 1944, too, Hart's N.E.C. printed and distributed the Flynn pamphlet, "Watch Dumbarton Oaks!" Following Hart's usual propaganda line, the Flynn pamphlet denounced this early attempt at international cooperation as an "international monstrosity."

And Flynn was active on other fronts in 1944. In March he sent members of Congress a statement saying: "It is time to call a halt to this persistent drive of recently arrived teachers—some of them refugees—who keep everlastingly at the job of inserting themselves into our government . . . not because they are Americans, but because they are the angry or injured or vengeful victims of enemies in other lands." And in effect he joined forces with the White Supremacy elements. The American Democratic National Committee that year fought unsuccessfully to force a White Supremacy plank into the Democratic Party's platform. Subsequently, the A.D. N.C. formed a sub-group called Democrats for Dewey; Flynn, addressing this sub-group in October, 1944, blamed Roosevelt for the war; Joseph Kamp's literature was distributed at this meeting even though the Department of Justice a year earlier cited Kamp's group as a channel through which subversive propaganda flowed.

It was also in 1944 that Flynn published one of the most popular of his pamphlets, "The Truth About Pearl Harbor."

This pamphlet, which pictures Japan as a nation pleading for peace and places the blame for Pearl Harbor on Roosevelt, "his columnists, his stooges, his Cabinet chiefs," became a best seller in far Right-wing circles as 1945 rolled around. Gerald L. K. Smith distributed reprints and announced that additional copies were available at twenty dollars a thousand; the *Boise Valley Herald*, an anti-Semitic newspaper published in Middleton, Idaho, offered

*Flynn's publishers over the years had included—besides Doubleday, Doran—Vanguard, Harcourt Brace, and Simon & Schuster. It is interesting to note, however, that the big publishing houses have not brought out any Flynn books since 1944. His subsequent books all were issued by little-known publishers such as Fireside Press and Devin-Adair, both in New York City.

copies for sale; the Coughlinite San Francisco *Leader*, reprinted the pamphlet in serial installments; the Citizens U.S.A. Committee, a far Right-wing group in Chicago, sold copies of the pamphlet at its meetings; We, the Mothers, Mobilize for America, a group which has praised and cooperated with international Fascist and anti-Semitic leaders such as Adrian Arcand and Einar Aberg, distributed copies at its 1945 convention; sedition indictee William Kullgren offered copies for sale; and the wartime sedition defendant Elizabeth Dilling commented: "Now that the astounding facts on Pearl Harbor have been publicized by John T. Flynn and the evidence shows that the Pearl Harbor debacle was a planned and maneuvered butchery to shock the American people into going to war for Jewry, history will record Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Jewish pack which manipulated him as the greatest war criminals in history."

The Chicago *Tribune* in 1945 printed Flynn's additional remarks on Roosevelt's Pearl Harbor "guilt;" the *Tribune's* sister newspapers, the Washington *Times-Herald* and the New York *Daily News*, seem to have printed the Flynn story simultaneously. Flynn himself later published these remarks in pamphlet form and called the new pamphlet "Final Secret of Pearl Harbor."

"Final Secret" quickly became a best-seller too. Elizabeth Dilling offered the pamphlet for sale—25 cents per copy; five copies for \$1.00—and offered a free copy to anyone sending in a four-months subscription to her bulletin. Wartime sedition defendant Gerald Winrod reprinted the pamphlet in his magazine, the *Defender*; Merwin K. Hart's National Economic Council distributed copies; so did We, the Mothers, Mobilize; sedition indictee Court Asher ran an advertisement for "Final Secret;" sedition defendant Charles B. Hudson praised Flynn's Pearl Harbor "expose;" and the extreme Fundamentalist *Showers of Blessing* praised both Hudson and the Flynn expose in the same issue.

Flynn And Dilling

Apparently, all hard feelings between Flynn and America's Fascist-like elements had disappeared by 1945. In January of that year Elizabeth Dilling and wartime sedition indictee Donald McDaniel attended a Flynn lecture and talked with him following the program. The conversation was quite friendly; Flynn indicated he was acquainted with Mrs. Dilling's work; and at one

point Flynn jokingly commented that he was "surprised" that some of the "smearers" weren't "around to take pictures of us together." When Mrs. Dilling introduced McDaniel to Flynn she pointed out that McDaniel had drawn the "cross of war" cartoons that figured so prominently in the wartime sedition case. "Oh those," Flynn commented, "Yes. They were fine."

American Action, Inc.

It was in 1945, too, that Merwin K. Hart began doing the spade work for American Action, Inc., a post-war coalition of Rightists which was to resemble the prewar America First Committee—except that American Action was to be a political action group with "door-bell ringing organizations" set up in the various Congressional districts.

Old America Firsters such as General Robert E. Wood; big money men such as Lamont Du Pont, Ernest Weir, John J. Raskob; anti-Catholic propagandists such as Carl McIntire; and leaders like Salem Bader (who protests about "ANTI-GENTILISM" and associates with Gerald L. K. Smith and We, the Mothers, Mobilize) all poured into Hart's American Action.

Shortly after American Action officially was formed in January, 1946, Flynn became a member of its national executive committee. Serving with him were General Wood; Samuel Pettengill of the Committee for Constitutional Government; Upton Close, the anti-war radio commentator who finally got around to identifying Judaism with Communism; and Robert M. Harriss, one-time financial advisor to Father Charles E. Coughlin.

Flynn resigned from the national executive committee three months after he had joined it, but apparently his resignation was not a result of any basic disagreement with American Action policy. Flynn personally contributed \$100 to the group, and as late as February, 1947, he said he would be happy to see American Action succeed—even though exposes of A.A. had run under banner headlines in metropolitan newspapers and a Congressional investigation of the group had gotten underway more than four months earlier.

Meanwhile, the tie between Flynn and America's extreme Right-wingers became closer. In July, 1946, Flynn published at his own expense a leaflet called "The Thought Police." This leaflet was a defense of the Chicago *Tribune* whose publisher, Colonel Robert McCormick,

FRIENDS OF DEMOCRACY'S BATTLE

Our faith is in the infinite improvability of mankind.
PUBLISHED twice monthly by Friends of Democracy, Inc., 137 E. 57th St. New York 22, N. Y. (Midwest office: 818 Grand Ave., Kansas City, Mo.)
Editors: Anne Simmons, L. M. Birkhead

Quotation or reprint authorized if credit is given to DEMOCRACY'S BATTLE.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Individual	\$3.00
Group of 10 or more	\$2.00 each
Group of 99 or more	\$1.50 each

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had been associated with American Action. Around the same time Hart's National Economic Council distributed a reprint of a Flynn article, "Dec. 7 'Whitewash' Is Congress Scandal;" this article originally appeared in Hearst's New York *Journal-American*. The wartime sedition indictee C. Leon de Aryan quoted Flynn; so did the Coughlinite Brooklyn *Tablet*; Arthur W. Terminiello, who at that time had been suspended from the Catholic priesthood because of his pro-Fascist activity, offered Flynn pamphlets for sale. Flynn was praised or plugged by Gerald L. K. Smith; Jeremiah Stokes, who later became Elizabeth Dilling's second husband; S. O. Sanderson, one of Gerald L. K. Smith's associates; and the *Imps Bulletin*, a monthly which recommended Flynn as well as sedition defendants such as Elizabeth Dilling and Charles Hudson. Marilyn Allen, in her booklet, "Judaic-Communism vs. Christian Americanism;" called Flynn's "The Thought Police" a "brilliant expose."

In January, 1947, the Chicago *Tribune* published Flynn's attack on the "smearers"—the "private gestapos formed to terrorize citizens." Subsequently, published in pamphlet form under the title "The Smear Terror," this, too, proved to be one of Flynn's best-sellers. 1200 copies were sold over the counter and by mail at the Chicago *Tribune* office on the first day of sale, and 3400 more were sold by the end of the week.

The wartime sedition defendants and their friends found this pamphlet particularly appealing; after all, it attacked groups like Friends

of Democracy which for years had been exposing their Fascist-like activities. The pamphlet charged, for example, that F.O.D. officials Rex Stout and L. M. Birkhead had "assassinated" the character of a large number of people—including the Rightist hero, Charles A. Lindbergh.

Winrod Comments

Naturally enough, sedition defendant Gerald Winrod quoted "The Smear Terror" at length in his magazine, the *Defender*; commented: "I know from experience, that Mr. Flynn's exposures are true;" and offered copies for sale straight through 1947 and 1948. Flynn admitted telling his secretary to send defendant Elizabeth Dilling the copies of "The Smear Terror" which she had requested. Sedition indictee Court Asher plugged this Flynn expose too.

Maude de Land, who belonged to Friends of New Germany, predecessor of the German American Bund, said she was "so glad Mr. Flynn got out his pamphlet on 'The Smear Terror.'" We, the Mothers, Mobilize plugged the Flynn pamphlet. Winrod's associate, W. D. Herrstrom, offered the pamphlet for sale in 1948 and 1949; the Dayton *Independent* ran an excerpt from it; the Danville, Virginia, *Individualist* advertised it; the Gerald L. K. Smith associate, Lawrence Reilly, offered copies for sale; and Merwin K. Hart sent copies to those on the National Economic Council mailing list.

Flynn's book, *The Roosevelt Myth*, published in 1948 by Devin-Adair, New York City, received a similar reception in far Rightist circles.

But it is Flynn's latest book, *The Road Ahead*, published by Devin-Adair, 1949, which may become his

most popular best-seller.

Flynn apparently dislikes Britain under Atlee as heartily as he disliked Britain under Churchill, for a good part of *The Road Ahead* is devoted to denouncing "British Socialism." But perhaps it is Flynn's discussion of America which is most revealing.

The Road Ahead concedes that the American Communist Party is "the agent of a foreign power" and, "to this extent," "is organized treason." But, after declaring flatly that anti-Communist liberals are "Social Planners" in disguise, Flynn says: "... there is no need to make too fine a distinction between Communists . . . and Social Planners . . . And as we look around for the real enemy . . . we need be in no doubt. . . . He is the Socialist Planner."

"Socialist Planners," according to the Flynn book, dominate the C.I.O., the A.F. of L., the Democratic Party, and the Truman administration as well as such liberal anti-Communist organizations as Americans for Democratic Action and the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America.* Even those who advocate civil rights legislation to better the plight of American Negroes are "Socialist Planners," Flynn claims.

At one point in *The Road Ahead* Flynn says in italics that "the great

*An interesting sidelight on THE ROAD AHEAD is this: The special Committee for Constitutional Government edition carries some supplementary material including a speech by Ralph Gwinn, a Congressman who has worked closely with the C.C.G. Not long after the book's publication, leaders of the Federal Council of Churches, a group Flynn charged with promoting "Socialistic planning," called Gwinn and said something like this: "Congressman, Mr. Flynn's book says the Federal Council is responsible for some material that the Federal Council had nothing to do with. That material was put out by an entirely different religious group; in fact, it is the religious group which lists YOU as a member of its Board."

menace" is "not the communism of Russia nor the Communists in America." He adds that many of America's noisiest opponents of Communism "are infinitely more dangerous to the civilization of this country than the small group of Red birds" whom they oppose.

In other words, Flynn's principal enemy is not totalitarian Communism, but the democratic liberalism which is the predominant force in all the western democracies.

The Committee for Constitutional Government, many of whose leaders and backers over the years have been associated with Merwin K. Hart's various enterprises, immediately launched an all-out campaign to sell the new Flynn book.

Through a special arrangement with the publishers, the C.C.G. set out to sell 250,000 copies at 50 cents per copy; a fibre bound edition, obtainable from the C.C.G. after the first 250,000 were exhausted, would sell for \$1 a copy; regular cloth bound copies—\$2.50 each—could be ordered through the C.C.G. too.

Through mass distribution to "opinion-moulding leadership individuals," the C.C.G. hoped to place half million copies in circulation by January 20, 1950—even though the book wasn't published until late in 1949. *The Road Ahead* should be a second *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, C.C.G. literature said.

Meanwhile, *The Road Ahead* began being plugged by the usual extremists—sedition indictee C. Leon de Aryan, the anti-Catholic *Christian Beacon*, the Coughlinite *San Francisco Leader*. And Flynn himself was a sponsor of Merwin K. Hart's National Economic Council dinner held late in 1949.

DECEMBER 15, 1949

DEMOCRACY'S BATTLE

published by

FRIENDS OF DEMOCRACY INC.
137 East 57th Street, New York 22, N. Y.

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